

common room 2

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UNHOUSED

organized by In the Field

mar 27–may 25, 2007

thursday mar 29: Lecture by Brett Bloom and Ava Bromberg of In the Field:

Global housing crises are not abstract. They are visible and viscerally experienced on the ground where people sleep, gather, eat and raise their families. While conditions in distinct and distant cultures may differ, they are increasingly interrelated; so are the processes that generate these conditions. People are actively (and passively) unhoused by markets, governments, wars, ethnic violence, gentrification, natural and manmade disasters, and other factors. Where markets and governments fail to provide housing, people are left to provide housing for themselves. The creative efforts of individuals, groups, and others invested in improving the condition of daily life and shelter at the margins of affordability are the subject of this exhibition. The material presented here is drawn from research on creative responses to global housing crises we are doing in preparation for a book called UNHOUSED.

We are putting multiple forms of housing crises in relation to one another in a way they never are. We are exploring the relationships between diverse phenomena: gentrification in wealthy Western cities, the slum clearance that accompanies the Olympic Games nearly wherever it goes, the occupation of large tracts of land in rural Brazil by thousands of “landless” people and more. The purpose of this project is not to glorify or fetishize life under difficult conditions. Rather, our intention is to give visibility to the magnitude and complexity of housing crises and to stimulate thoughtful action, facilitate potential collaborations amongst innovators on the ground, and – we hope – inspire meaningful policies that can better house people at all levels of society.

Over the next 5 years, we will travel to dozens of cities to conduct research. We will seek out highly localized forms of creative engagement with housing problems all over the world – from direct actions to house people to innovative changes in public policy. Our efforts will combine the work of artists, urban planners, activists, architects, and UNHOUSED populations themselves. We will seek out people who have already conducted in depth investigations of UNHOUSING, like some of the material presented in this exhibition.

In the Field’s work begins by looking at, listening to, and learning from how people transform the spaces they inherit and build new spaces based on their needs and desires. We seek out and celebrate the enormous creativity of these ordinary actions. Whether appearing as a spontaneously generated public space, in modifications to existing spaces, or in an example of self-housing or community generated urban planning, we take these hyper-local articulations as a rich entry point into understanding the complex ways in which the built environment is shaped. We gather these examples in books, field guides, and exhibitions with the aim of sharing good strategies and making little known projects visible. We consciously work with the power of adjacencies because together projects can bring to bare ideas and concepts larger than any project viewed in isolation.

We blend approaches and knowledge from visual art, urban planning, and creative activism. We operate in an exploded field and work to expand it further still because we care about opening up spaces for new possibilities and social forms.

for more information visit: www.inthefield.info